

REMARKS

Applicants filed an Information Disclosure Statement on February 5, 2004 but have not received an initialed form PTO 1449. A copy of the Information Disclosure Statement and a stamped post card receipt therefore are enclosed. It is respectfully requested that the references in the Information Disclosure Statement be considered and an initialed form PTO 1449 be returned.

Applicants request favorable reconsideration and allowance of the subject application in view of the preceding amendments and the following remarks.

Claims 48-62 are now presented for examination. Claim 48 is the only independent claim.

Claims 48-62 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102 as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,319,322 (Ueda et al.). This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Pending independent Claim 48 is directed to exposure apparatus for exposing a wafer to a pattern that has a chamber in which an atmosphere is conditioned to be different from an atmosphere in another apparatus outside the exposure apparatus and in which the wafer is exposed to the pattern and a port section through which the wafer is transferred between the chamber and the other apparatus. The port section has a load-lock mechanism including a vacuum mechanism for creating a vacuum inside the port section and a supply mechanism for supplying an inert gas into the inside of the port section.

In Applicants' view, Ueda et al. discloses substrate processing apparatus in which temperature regulation is performed at a buffer cassette wherein a wafer is temporarily housed

before and after being delivered to/from an aligner, or at an inlet-side delivery stage of a portion for delivering a wafer to the aligner, in reference with a state of temperature regulation of the wafer in the aligner, so that the temperature of the wafer can be more accurately regulated on a temperature regulating plate in the aligner in a shorter time.

According to the invention of pending Claim 48, a wafer is transferred between a chamber in which atmosphere is conditioned to be different than in another apparatus and the other apparatus. The port section has a load-lock mechanism that has a vacuum mechanism for creating a vacuum inside the port section and a supply mechanism for supplying an inert gas into the inside of the port section.

Ueda et al. may disclose a substrate processing apparatus in which temperature regulation is performed at a buffer cassette in which a wafer is temporarily housed before and after delivery to or from an aligner. With respect to the feature of Claim 48 of a vacuum mechanism for creating a vacuum inside the port section, it is clearly disclosed at lines 6-18 of column 12 in Ueda et al. that "An exhaust port 415 is provided at the lower part of the first chamber 413, and an exhaust port 416 is provided at the lower part of the second chamber 414. To the exhaust ports 415 and 416, an exhauster 417 is connected, and the first and second chambers 413 and 414 are exhausted by the exhauster 417. In this embodiment, the inlet-side delivery stage 28 and the outlet-side delivery stage 29 in the interface section 12 shown in FIG. 6, are replaced with the inlet-side delivery housing section 401 and the outlet-side delivery housing section 402 in which the above stages are multi-tiered respectively, thereby eliminating the need for provision of a buffer cassette BR in the interface section 12." It is further disclosed at lines 55-58 of column 9

of Ueda et al. that "The inside of the aligner 200 is under positive pressure by the clean gas supplied from the outside. On the other hand, the inside of the interface section 12 is naturally exhausted to be under normal pressure." The exhauster 417 in Fig. 12 of Ueda et al. only removes air under normal pressure from the cassettes 401 and 402 through exhaust ports 415 and 416 but does not in any manner teach or suggest creating a vacuum inside of a port section as in Claim 48.

With regard to the feature of Claim 48 of a supply mechanism that supplies an inert gas into the inside of the port section, it is clearly disclosed at lines 55 through 58 of column 11 that "In FIG. 12, a numeral 410 is a first gas supply section for supplying the temperature regulated clean gas (air) to the aligner 200, and a numeral 411 is a second gas supply section for supplying the temperature regulated clean gas (air) to the developing unit (DEV)." The Ueda et al. disclosure, however, is devoid of any teaching or suggestion of an inert gas but rather requires "clean gas (air)". Accordingly, it is not seen that Ueda et al. in any manner teaches or suggests the feature of Claim 48 of a supply mechanism for supplying an inert gas into the inside of the port section. It is therefore believed that in at least in the foregoing respects pending Claim 48 is completely distinguished from Ueda et al. and is allowable.

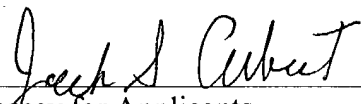
A review of the other art of record has failed to reveal anything which, in Applicants' opinion, would remedy the deficiencies of the art discussed above, as references against the independent claim herein. Those claims are therefore believed patentable over the art of record. It is submitted that the foregoing remarks clarify Applicants' invention and serve to reduce any issues for appeal.

The other claims in this application are each dependent from one or another of the independent claims discussed above and are therefore believed patentable for the same reasons. Since each dependent claim is also deemed to define an additional aspect of the invention, however, the individual reconsideration of the patentability of each on its own merits is respectfully requested.

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, Applicants respectfully request favorable consideration and reconsideration and early passage to issue of the present application. The Examiner is respectfully requested to enter this Amendment After Final Action under 37 C.F.R. § 1.116.

Applicants' attorney, Steven E. Warner, may be reached in our Washington, D.C. office by telephone at (202) 530-1010. All correspondence should be directed to our address listed below.

Respectfully submitted,



Attorney for Applicants
Jack S. Cubert
Registration No. 24,245

FITZPATRICK, CELLA, HARPER & SCINTO
30 Rockefeller Plaza
New York, New York 10112-3800
Facsimile: (212) 218-2200
SEW/JSC/dc

DC_MAIN 164419v1